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## BOOKS

**MARINA AND LEE**  
By Priscilla Johnson McMillan  
Harper & Row. \$15

# A mission to resolve their tragic destiny

THE OSWALDS—Lee, Marina, and their baby  
daughter June, in Russia in 1962.

Reviewed by  
Larry Swindell  
Inquirer Book Editor

The first impulse is to sigh over the appearance of yet another book about Lee Harvey Oswald. . . *e pluribus unum*. But wait, this one is as different as it is unexpected: a strong, thoughtful, and very readable account of Marina Alexandrov's turbulent romance and abrasive marriage with the man who would assassinate John Kennedy, then himself be slain.

There has certainly been no "Oswald book" like this one, nor is it likely to be duplicated. Marina Oswald, the frightened, dismayed widow who understood no English,

sought early to avoid the glare of attention, and remained inaccessible to newsmen and would-be biographers even after making a new life for herself, remarried and living in suburban Dallas and learning to speak English well.

But there was one early exception. Priscilla Johnson McMillan, a Bryn Mawr product who became fluent in Russian and was for several years a working journalist in the Soviet Union, won Marina's confidence soon after the assassinations, primarily because she had met and interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald when he was an American defector in the Soviet Union.

Compounding the irony, Priscilla McMillan had also been been an aide to John Kennedy when he was a senator, qualifying for a time as very nearly a good friend to the man destined for presidential martyrdom.

Marina Oswald for several months during the immediate devastation of her widowhood, and relived with Marina the woman's life, but with emphasis on her time — less than three years — with Oswald. Marina opened up to the woman who offered compassion and spoke her language, and the deferred issue of their extended meeting is a chronicle of remarkable completeness and detail, intimate and involving.

It is important to consider that this is not an "as told to" autobiography. Mrs. McMillan is no ghost-writer but a skilled and scrupulous journalist who, as author, brings her own perspective — not just Marina's — to bear on every page.

No doubt there will be some carping that the book is self-serving for Marina, and that some of her recollections are summoned wishfully, or perhaps with remarkable hindsight. Yet it seems to me quite a courageous book — for Marina, and

also for Priscilla McMillan, whose previous literary endeavor was the translation of Svetlana Alliluyeva's "Twenty Letters to a Friend."

For most readers, the primary lure will be the psychological portrait of Lee Oswald, for which Mrs. McMillan has supplemented research far beyond her sessions with Marina.

Her evidence authenticates Lee Harvey Oswald as an authentic American tragedy. His troubles began in the womb, when his father died two months before he was born. He struggled to escape a devouring mother. He wanted fame or an equivalent certification of identity. He was politically naive and impressionable, thirsty for commitment, a dedicated Marxist without the intellectual capacity to be one. He was always terribly confused.

Conspiracy theorists will not like this book, which implies Mrs. McMillan's basic acceptance of the Warren Commission findings. Certainly Marina Oswald was convinced that her husband had murdered the president, and that he had acted alone. The Oswald characterized here is no one the CIA would be likely to touch with that well-known 10-foot pole.

But while Lee Oswald definitely was one of life's losers, Marina emerges as a born survivor and an ultimate winner. She may not capture your heart, but I believe she deserves to.